STAGES OF A MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

Stage 1: Developing Rapport and Building Trust

The "getting to know you" phase is the most critical stage of the relationship. Things to expect and work on during Stage 1 include:

- **Predictability and consistency**
  During the first stage of the relationship, it is critical to be both predictable and consistent. If you schedule an appointment to meet your mentee at a certain time, it's important to keep it. It is understandable that at times things come up and appointments cannot be kept. However, in order to speed up the trust-building process, consistency is necessary, even if the young person is not as consistent as you are.

- **Testing**
  Young people generally do not trust adults. As a result, they use testing as a coping or defense mechanism to determine whether they can trust you. They will test to see if you really care about them. A mentee might test the mentor by not showing up for a scheduled meeting to see how the mentor will react.

- **Establish confidentiality**
  During the first stage of the relationship, it's important to establish confidentiality with your young person. This helps develop trust. The mentor should let the mentee know that whatever he or she wants to share with the mentor will remain confidential, as long as (and it's important to stress this point) what the young person tells the mentor is not going to harm the young person or someone else. It's helpful to stress this up front, within the first few meetings with the mentee. That way, later down the road, if a mentor needs to break the confidence because the information the mentee shared was going to harm him or her or someone else, the young person will not feel betrayed.

- **Goal setting (transitions into Stage 2)**
  It's helpful during Stage 1 to take the time to set at least one achievable goal together for the relationship. What do the two of you want to get out of this relationship? It's also good to help your mentee set personal goals. Young people often do not learn how to set goals, and this will provide them with the opportunity to set goals and work toward achieving them.

Stage 2: The Middle—Reaching Goals

Once trust has been established, the relationship moves into Stage 2. During this stage, the mentor and mentee can begin to start working toward the goals they set during the first stage of the relationship. Things to expect during Stage 2 include:

- **Closeness**
  Generally, during the second stage the mentor and mentee can sense a genuine closeness in the relationship.

- **Affirming the uniqueness of the relationship**
  Once the relationship has reached this stage, it's helpful to do something special or different from what the mentor and mentee did during the first stage, which helps affirm the uniqueness of the relationship. For example, go to a museum, sporting event, special restaurant, etc.

- **The relationship may be rocky or smooth**
  All relationships have their ups and downs. Once the relationship has reached the second stage, there will still be some rough periods. Mentors should be prepared and not assume that something is wrong with the relationship if this happens.

- **Rely on staff support**

Stage 3: Closure

If the rough period continues or if a mentor feels that the pair has not reached the second stage, he or she shouldn't hesitate to seek support from the mentoring program coordinator. Sometimes two people, no matter how they look on paper, just don't "click." Some mentor/mentee pairs don't need to worry about this stage until farther down the road. However, at some point all relationships will come to an end—whether it's because the program is over, the mentor is moving or for some other reason. When this happens, it's critical that the closure stage not be overlooked. Many young people today have already had adults come and go in their lives and are very rarely provided the opportunity to say a proper goodbye.

- **Identify natural emotions, such as grief, denial and resentment**
  In order to help mentees express emotions about the relationship ending, mentors should model appropriate behavior. The mentor should first express his or her feelings and emotions about the end of the relationship and then let the mentee do the same.

- **Provide opportunities for saying goodbye in a healthy, respectful and affirming way**
  Mentors shouldn't wait for the very last meeting with their mentees to say goodbye. The mentor should slowly bring it up as soon as he or she becomes aware that the relationship will be coming to a close.

- **Address appropriate situations for staying in touch**
  Mentors should check with the mentoring program coordinator to find out the policy for staying in touch with their mentees once the program has come to an end. This is especially important if the program is school-based and mentors and mentees meet during the school year but the program officially ends before the summer starts. If mentors and mentees are *mutually* interested in continuing to meet over the summer, they may be allowed to, but with the understanding that school personnel may not be available should an emergency arise. Each mentoring program may have its own policy for future contact between mentors and mentees. That's why it's best for mentors to check with program personnel during this stage.

GUIDELINES FOR MENTORS

It's not possible to anticipate every situation and the appropriate behavior to apply when one is mentoring. However, here are a few suggestions to use as general guidelines:

Do:

- Get to know your mentee. Try to really understand how things are for him or her now.
- Be positive, patient, dependable, honest and sincere.
- Be consistent, but flexible. Expect changes in plans.
- Encourage, praise and compliment – even the smallest of accomplishments.
- Be an active listener. Use language that's easy to understand.
- Give concrete explanations.
- Be straight, honest and sincere (people pick up on falseness and shallowness).
- Ask for opinions and participation in decision-making.
- Work with your mentee. Share your knowledge rather than giving advice.
- Be enthusiastic – it's contagious.
- Stress the positive.
- Be firm. Have your mentee assume responsibilities and hold him or her accountable.
- Help your mentee use mistakes as learning experiences.
- Be fair – they'll notice if you're not.
- Help identify your mentee's talents, strengths and assets.
- Tell your mentee about yourself, especially what you remember from your high school years.
- Help them identify the significance for their own lives of the information you are discussing (e.g., possible future profession, similar experiences, etc.) – tell them how they can use the information.
- Have activities planned in advance.
- Take the initiative. A mentee who fails to call or attend must be pursued and the coordinator notified of the situation so that issues can be resolved and sessions can begin again, if applicable.
- If you're going to miss a mentoring session, call the coordinator and leave a message for the mentee. It is important to let the mentee know you did not forget about your mentoring session.
- Learn to appreciate your mentee's cultural and ethnic background. Strive toward cultural reciprocity.
- Be open to what your mentee can teach you or share with you.
- **Honor Your Commitment – This is extremely important! You'll hear this over and over again!**
- **HAVE FUN!**

Adapted from materials provided by The Mentoring Partnership of New York, *Mentoring In the Faith Community: An Operations Manual for Program Coordinators* and from Virginia Mentoring Partnership.

Don't:

- Expect to have instant rapport with your mentee.
- Be lenient in order to be liked – it won't earn their respect, and they need consistency and structure.
- Lecture, moralize or preach.
- Tell them what to do (instead, you should suggest, invite, encourage).
- Share personal problems unless it is to explain your current disposition (e.g., tired or irritable).
- Make promises you can't keep.
- Be convinced that what mentees say is always what they mean.
- Pry into the young person's life. If a mentee pries into your affairs, it is okay to say that some things in your life are private just as they are in his or her life.
- Be afraid to admit that you do not know an answer or that you have made a mistake. Find the correct answer and learn together. It helps the mentee to see that you are learning too.
- Interpret lack of enthusiasm as a personal rejection or reaction to you.
- Be sarcastic or use excessive teasing.
- Refer to youths that reside in public housing as being from "the projects."
- Lend money.
- Violate confidences, with the single *exception of crisis intervention situations*, in which case you must contact the coordinator privately and immediately.
- Forget your own adolescence. What do you wish an adult had said to you or done for you at that time in your life?
- Attempt to become a surrogate parent to a child.

HELPFUL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

The following four communication skills are very helpful for mentors to develop and practice. These skills are particularly useful when your goal is to open up communication with a young person. They are also useful skills that you can help your mentee develop:

Active Listening

Active listening is an attempt to truly understand the content and emotion of what the other person is saying by paying attention to verbal and non-verbal messages. The task is to focus, hear, respect and communicate your desire to understand. This is not the time to be planning a response or conveying how you feel.

Active listening is *not* nagging, cajoling, reminding, threatening, criticizing, questioning, advising, evaluating, probing, judging or ridiculing.

Skills to Use:

- Eye contact;
- Body language: open and relaxed posture, forward lean, appropriate facial expressions, positive use of gestures; and
- Verbal cues such as "um-hmmm," "sure," "ah" and "yes."

Results of Active Listening:

- Encourages honesty — helps people free themselves of troublesome feelings by expressing them openly;
- Reduces fear — helps people become less afraid of negative feelings;
- Builds respect and affection;
- Increases acceptance — promotes a feeling of understanding; and

When you actively listen, you cooperate in solving the problem — and in preventing future problems.

"I" Messages

These messages give the opportunity to keep the focus on you and explain your feelings in response to someone else's behavior. Because "I" messages don't accuse, point fingers at the other person or place blame, they avoid judgments and help keep communication open. At the same time, "I" messages continue to advance the situation to a problem-solving stage.

For example: "I was really sad when you didn't show up for our meeting last week. I look forward to our meetings and was disappointed not to see you. In the future, I would appreciate it if you could call me and let me know if you will not be able to make it."

Avoid: "You didn't show up, and I waited for an hour. You could have at least called me and let me know that you wouldn't be there. You are irresponsible."

Take care that the following actions and behaviors are congruent with an honest, open heart:

- Body language: slouching, turning away, pointing a finger;
- Timing: speaking too fast or too slow;
- Facial expression: smiling, squirming, raising eyebrows, gritting teeth;
- Tone of voice: shouting, whispering, sneering, whining; and
- Choice of words: biting, accusative, pretentious, emotionally laden.

Results:
"I" messages present only one perspective. Allowing the other person to actually have a point of view and hearing it doesn't mean that he or she is right. "I" messages communicate both information and respect for each position. Again, this skill moves both parties along to the problem-solving stage.

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing focuses on listening first and then reflecting the two parts of the speaker's message — *fact* and *feeling* — back to the speaker. Often, the fact is clearly stated, but a good listener is "listening between the lines" for the "feeling" part of the communication. Using this skill is a way to check out what you heard for accuracy — did you interpret what your mentee said correctly? This is particularly helpful with youth, as youth culture/language change constantly. Often words that meant one thing when mentors were young could have an entirely different meaning for youth today.

Examples for *fact*:

- "So you're saying that . . ."
- "You believe that . . ."
- "The problem is . . ."

Examples for *feeling*:

- "You feel that . . ."
- "Your reaction is . . ."
- "And that made you feel . . ."

Paraphrases are not an opportunity to respond by evaluating, sympathizing, giving an opinion, offering advice, analyzing or questioning.

Results:
Using active listening skills will enable you to gather the information and then be able to simply report back what you heard in the message — the facts and the attitudes/feelings that were expressed. Doing so lets the other person know that you hear, understand and care about his or her thoughts and feelings.

Open-Ended Questions

Open-ended questions are intended to collect information by exploring feelings, attitudes and how the other person views a situation. Open-ended questions are extremely helpful when dealing with young people. Youth, teenagers especially, tend to answer questions with as few words as possible. To maintain an active dialogue without interrogating, try to ask a few questions that cannot be answered with a "yes," "no," "I don't know," or a grunt.

Examples:

- "How do you see this situation?"
- "What are your reasons for . . . ?"
- "Can you give me an example?"
- "How does this affect you?"
- "How did you decide that?"
- "What would you like to do about it?"
- "What part did you play?"

Note: Using the question "Why did you do that?" may sometimes yield a defensive response rather than a clarifying response.

Results:
Because open-ended questions require a bit more time to answer than close-ended questions (questions that can be answered by "yes," "no," or a brief phrase), they give the person a chance to explain. Open-ended questions yield significant information that can in turn be used to problem solve.

MENTOR ROLES AND TASKS

Here are some games to play that present a mentor's roles and responsibilities (as well as what he or she is not responsible for). This is one of the most important sections in the training, so the more fun it is, the more memorable it will be.

What Is and What Is Not a Mentor?

Real-Life Mentors

For people to really understand what a mentor is, it helps to have them think about someone who has been a mentor for them in their own life. This activity is a good lead-in to the "what is a mentor" piece of the training.

- Ask if anyone has had a mentor before. (Often, no one will answer "yes" because they think mentors have to be people you meet through mentoring programs.)
- Explain that a mentor could be anyone older in his or her life who has offered advice, guidance or a listening ear (such as a teacher, sibling or neighbor).
- Ask again who has had a mentor (you will find more positive responses this time). Ask these people to share with the group who their mentor was and what qualities made him or her a good mentor.

Mentor Family Feud

Beforehand: Prepare a flip chart with two columns as follows (or use whatever words you think best describe a mentor's role):

A Mentor Is:	**A Mentor Isn't:**
Friend	Parent/Guardian
Guide	Social Worker
Listener	ATM
Confidant	Babysitter
Resource Broker	Disciplinarian

Cover up the answers with slips of paper so that you can reveal them as people guess them correctly. Split the audience into two teams. Pick one team to go first. They must pick a column (what a mentor is, or what a mentor isn't) and try to guess one of the answers. You can tell them that these are all nouns and were generated by conducting a large survey. These responses are the top five recorded answers from the survey.

Qualities of a Good Mentor

While you are discussing what a mentor is, you may want to have the group think about what the qualities of a good mentor are. Have them brainstorm a list of qualities that their own mentors have had, the kind of mentor they want to be, or the kind of mentor they would like to have themselves. This brainstorming exercise can help clarify what a mentor is and can give the volunteers a list of qualities to aim for.

A Mentor Is . . .

- **A trusted guide or friend**
  Young people today do not get much of an opportunity to be friends with adults, especially adults who are going to listen to them.

- **A caring, responsible adult**
  He or she provides access to people, places and things outside the mentee's routine environment.

- **A positive role model**
  A mentor may be a positive role model. A role model is someone the youth aspires to be like, whereas a mentor is someone who offers to help the youth be whoever he or she wants to be. Today, youth have many role models; however, they are not necessarily positive role models.

Key Qualities of a Good Mentor

- Good listener;
- Persistent;
- Committed; and
- Patient.

A Mentor Is Not . . .

Mentors must understand that they cannot be all things to their mentees. Quite often when mentors run into problems in their relationships, it is because the mentor, the mentee or the parent/legal guardian did not understand the proper role of a mentor.

The mentor may have taken on one of the following inappropriate roles:

A parent/legal guardian
The role of a parent or legal guardian (governed by law) is to provide food, shelter and clothing. It is not the mentor's role to fulfill these responsibilities. If the mentor believes his or her mentee is not receiving adequate support, he or she should contact the mentor program coordinator rather than trying to meet the needs of his or her mentee.

A social worker
A social worker is a licensed professional with the necessary skills and training to assist in family issues. If a mentor believes there is something wrong in the mentee's home life, the mentor should share this concern with the mentor program coordinator and not assume the role of a social worker and attempt to solve the problem.

A psychologist
A mentor is not a formal counselor or therapist. A psychologist or psychiatrist is a licensed professional.

It is more appropriate for a mentor to act as a ***resource broker*** *and show the mentee how to access the services and resources he or she needs than to provide those services.*

The Four Primary Tasks of a Mentor

Establish a positive, personal relationship with mentee:

- Establish mutual trust and respect;
- Maintain regular interaction and consistent support; and
- Make your meetings enjoyable and fun.

Help mentee to develop or begin to develop life skills:

- Work with your mentee to accomplish specific program goals (e.g., drop-out prevention, general career awareness); and
- Instill the framework for developing broader life-management skills, (e.g., decision-making skills, goal-setting skills, conflict resolution, money management).

Assist mentee in obtaining additional resources:

- Provide awareness of community, educational and economic resources available to youth and their families, and how to access these resources. Act as a resource broker as opposed to a resource provider;
- Act as a guide and/or advocate, coach and/or model; and
- Avoid acting as a professional case manager. View the role of a mentor as a friend rather than a counselor.

Increase mentee's ability to interact with people/groups/things from various backgrounds (cultural, racial, socioeconomic, etc.):

- Respect and explore differences among people/groups from various backgrounds. Do not promote values and beliefs of one group as superior to those of another; and
- Introduce mentee to different environments, such as workplace vs. school setting; discuss differences in behavior, attitude and style of dress.

RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT CHECKLIST

How Often Should My Program Check in with their Mentors?

Many programs have found that the following approach works well:

1. Contact the mentor within the first two weeks of the match. Use this contact to make sure the pair is meeting, to find out what activities they have done together and to assess how the mentor feels about the match thus far.

2. During the next few months, continue to check in with the mentor every two weeks. These ongoing contacts will help ensure that the mentor and youth meet regularly and are also important for uncovering any start-up problems that require program staff's immediate assistance. (Many school-based mentoring programs keep track of how frequently each pair is meeting by having a logbook at the school where mentors sign in. However, it is still essential to have regular telephone or face-to-face contact to discuss the match.)

3. For at least a year, continue to check in monthly with the mentor. The check-in discussion during this period should be focused on monitoring the quality of the mentoring relationship, assessing whether it is making progress toward its goals, learning whether the mentor or youth is losing interest in the match, and helping to address problems that may be arising between the pair. Your program should also make sure that mentors know how to contact staff, whenever necessary, for advice and support.

What Questions Should We Ask During the Check-Ins?

Possible questions for the mentor include:

- ☐ How is your match going? How do you feel about being a mentor?
- ☐ Do you and your mentee enjoy spending time together?
- ☐ What kinds of activities do you do when you are together?
- ☐ How do you decide what activities to do together? Do you and your mentee have trouble thinking up things to do together?
- ☐ Do you spend much time talking?
- ☐ How often do you see your mentee? How much time do you spend together at each meeting?
- ☐ Does your mentee keep appointments with you? Does he or she show up on time?
- ☐ When was your last meeting? What did you do together?
- ☐ Do you talk to your mentee on the telephone? How often? (for community-based programs)
- ☐ Do you need help with anything? Is there anything interfering with your match?
- ☐ How would you describe your mentee's behavior? Does your mentee exhibit any behavior that you do not understand?
- ☐ How are things going with the parents and other family members? Is the parent of your mentee cooperative? (or, for school-based programs: How are things going with the teacher?)

- ☐ Are you satisfied with how things are going?
- ☐ Is there any training you think would be helpful for you?
- ☐ Is there anything else we should be aware of?
- ☐ Is there anything we can do to help?

Questions to ask the youth include:

- ☐ Do you enjoy spending time with your mentor?
- ☐ What do you enjoy most about having a mentor? What do you enjoy least?
- ☐ When was the last time you met with your mentor? What did you do together?
- ☐ How often do you see your mentor? How long do your meetings last?
- ☐ Does your mentor keep appointments? Does he or she show up on time?
- ☐ Who decides what activities you are going to do together?
- ☐ Do you like talking to your mentor?
- ☐ Is there anything you would like to change about the visits?
- ☐ Is there anything you would like me to talk to your mentor about?

During the check-ins with parents/guardians, you can ask:

- ☐ Is your child happy with his or her mentor?
- ☐ Does your child look forward to seeing his or her mentor?
- ☐ Do they seem to enjoy being together?
- ☐ Is there anything you would like me to discuss with either your child or the mentor?
- ☐ How often does your child see his or her mentor? How long do the meetings last?
- ☐ Does the mentor usually keep appointments and show up on time?
- ☐ Is there anything that concerns you about the relationship?
- ☐ How do you think they feel about the mentor?
- ☐ What do you think of the their weekly activities with the mentor?
- ☐ Would you like to see the activities change? How?
- ☐ How are they doing in school?
- ☐ Have you observed any positive or negative changes?
- ☐ Is there anything else we should be aware of?

MENTOR.
ALWAYS AT THE HEART OF MENTORING

Developing a Retention Plan

Initial Pre-Match Mentor Training

What topics will be covered? _____

_____

_____

_____

When will initial training happen? How often? _____

_____

Who will do the training? _____

What resources are required? _____

_____

Where will the training be held? _____

Making the Match

What criteria will you use to match mentors and mentees? _____

_____

_____

Who will do the matching? _____

What are the goals and objectives of the first meeting? _____

_____

_____

_____

What activities will take place at the first meeting to achieve the goals and objectives outlined above? _____

_____

_____

What resources are required (space, materials, etc.)? _____

What staff members are responsible for the first meeting? _____

Monitoring

How often will staff supervise/monitor relationships...

During the first month of the match? _____

Months 2 – 6 of the match? _____

Months 6 – 12 of match? _____

Over 12 months matched? _____

What methods of contact are acceptable...

During the first month of the match? _____

Months 2 – 6 of the match? _____

Months 6 – 12 of match? _____

Over 12 months matched? _____

What staff members are responsible for monitoring? _____

What topics will be addressed? What questions will be asked? _____

What procedures are in place to follow up on issues/concerns that arise from the monitoring process? _____

Activities

What types of activities will you program offer for...

Mentor/mentee pairs? _____

_____

Mentees only? _____

_____

Mentors only? _____

_____

Parents/Caregivers? _____

_____

How often will you offer activities for...

Mentor/mentee pairs? _____

Mentees only? _____

Mentors only? _____

Parents/Caregivers? _____

What staff members are responsible for planning and implementing activities?

_____

What resources are required (space, materials, etc.)? _____

_____

_____

Recognition

How will you recognize...

Mentor/mentee pairs? _____

_____

Mentees only? _____

Mentors only? _____

Parents/Caregivers? _____

Other stakeholders? :_____

How often will you recognize...

Mentor/mentee pairs? _____

Mentees only? _____

Mentors only? _____

Parents/Caregivers? _____

Other stakeholders? :_____

What staff members are responsible for planning and implementing activities?

_____

What resources are required (space, materials, etc.)? _____

_____

_____

Ongoing Training

What topics will be covered? _____

_____

_____

_____

When will ongoing training happen? How often? _____

_____

Who will do the training? _____

What resources are required? _____

_____

Where will the trainings be held? _____

TRAINING

Topics	Date/Frequency	Staff	Resources	Location
Initial (Pre-Match) Mentor Training				
Ongoing Training				

MAKING THE MATCH

Criteria	First Meeting Goals & Objectives	First Meeting Activities	Resources	Staff

MONITORING

Date/Frequency	Methods	Staff	Topics/Questions	Follow-up Procedures
1st month 2 – 6 months 6 -12 months Over 12 months	1st month 2 – 6 months 6 -12 months Over 12 months			

ONGOING SUPPORT

Activity/Type	Date/Frequency	Staff	Resources
Activities			
Recognition			